

Section I: General Information

A. Project Title: Value-Added Book Reviews: Any Time, Any Place

Submitting Agency: Nebraska Library Commission

Contact Information for this Project:

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B. Certification for Request:

I certify to the best of my knowledge the information in this application is correct and that the application has been authorized by this entity to meet the obligations set forth in this application.

Richard Miller
Library Development Director
Nebraska Library Commission
August 28, 2001

Total Grant Funds Requested:	\$ 8,322
Total Project Costs:	\$11,096

Section II: Executive Summary

Public and school libraries throughout Nebraska depend upon the Nebraska Library Commission to provide access to value-added reviews of books for young adults and children. Since 1993 the Commission has provided video recordings of oral reviews for 300 book titles twice a year. These reviews contain expertly chosen titles, presented in order to guarantee quality and usability for our nearly 280 public libraries and 600 school libraries. The reviews are broadcast over the state's videoconferencing system and then are made available via recorded videotape following the broadcast. Time required to watch all the tapes: approximately six hours.

Many people prefer the reviews as they are presently available, but an increasing number of libraries want the reviews to be made accessible in a greater variety of ways. Through a series of telephone interviews we have determined that the preferred alternative mode is via the Commission web site, an approach that will allow access any time, any place. It also allows direct access by specific book title, by author, by genre, and by reader age,

among other categories. Through work and cooperation with staff of Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET), we have found a solution to providing this vital service. In essence each book review will present a digitized photo of the book's cover, and of one or more interior pages to show examples of illustrations and typeface; in addition the oral review by each reviewer will be presented via sound output.

Section III: Goals and Objectives

1. Describe the project, including the specific goals and objectives.

Since 1993 the Nebraska Library Commission has provided book reviews of selected books appropriate for children and young adult readers via a number of videoconference hookup sites, and afterward via videotapes of these presentations. Each presentation (and video) shows a reviewer presenting their reviews of a number of titles that they have chosen within broad subject categories. Both the face of the reviewer and, alternately, a video shot of the front cover of the book and several pages and/or illustrations from the book are displayed while the reviewer delivers the oral review. After the videoconferenced reviews are presented, multiple copies of the videotaped sessions are provided to all six library Systems in the state as well as several copies added to the Commission's circulating collection.

As more and more public and school libraries gain access to higher speed Internet access, we have noted and verified an increased interest in access to these reviews by "user friendlier" means. We have heard, for example, from library staff that indicate that having to sit through approximately six hours of videotapes which offer no indexing system to allow moving to specific titles, authors or categories (except by guess work) is too time consuming. With the steady increase in the number of computer stations (and the higher speed access mentioned above), many users are ready to move to something more convenient and efficient for them. The preferred mode is via the Commission web site, an approach that will allow access any time, any place. It also allows direct access by specific book title, by author, by genre, and by reader age, among others.

During the last year we have worked closely with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications where the book reviews are currently videotaped every six months to seek a solution to provide this enhanced service. In essence we have developed a solutions that will allow improved, timesaving access any time and any place in Nebraska. Library staff will now be able to view the book reviews at work, at home or any place else that has Internet access. The value-added reviews (because the titles are selected according to quality criteria before reviewing) will allow school media staff and public library staff to offer quality titles they have seen and heard reviewed in an unbiased manner. This makes this service superior to services such as Amazon.com, for example, since such sources tend to offer only positive reviews for any titles they carry since their primary objective is to sell the books. The importance of this issue cannot be stressed enough especially

since many of Nebraska's libraries have staff untrained in materials selection generally, and in selection of children's and young adults' materials specifically.

Goals:

- Access any time, any place to quality-selected book reviews of young adult and children's titles by Nebraska librarians
- Updated methodology for providing these reviews statewide via a variety of access points
- Use of up-to-date technology by the Nebraska Library Commission and by local libraries to provide enhanced services to library staff with responsibility for these library materials

Objectives:

- To provide on-line access via the Commission's web site to book reviews
- To develop methods that will be easy and intuitive for library users in order to facilitate access to this information
- To work with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications staff to initiate this improved method of delivery and to investigate the possibility of making this service available to other interested states on a pay-as-you-go basis
- To encourage the use of time efficient methods for local libraries in accessing this information
- To ensure the continued provision of quality books titles for Nebraska's public and school libraries in their services to children and young adults
- To test the usefulness and employment of this new method for providing this service through the gathering of use data during the first year of operation; to follow up with a survey to determine interest in continuing

2. Describe the project's relationship to the agency's comprehensive technology plan.

The mission of the Nebraska Library Commission, as presented in its current long-range plan, *Libraries for the 21st Century – 1997 – 2002*, states:

"The mission of the Nebraska Library Commission is statewide promotion, development, and coordination of library and information services. As the state library agency, the Commission is an advocate for the library and information service needs of all Nebraskans."

This mission statement generally supports the effort proposed in this application to the Nebraska Information Technology Commission, and specifically it addresses statewide development and coordination of library services. It also specifically addresses the Commission's role as an advocate for library and information services for all Nebraskans which, of course, includes children and young adults.

In the rest of the Commission's Comprehensive IT Plan numerous citations appear that support the project proposed in this application, namely:

- The plan lists ten major service areas; among these are: education and training, resource sharing, and measurement of quality
- Primary partners and beneficiaries of the plan include, among others public libraries and school library media centers.
- Under section 3.A.4 Electronic Government – External, which lists customers/users outside the agency, a number of web-based services are anticipated. Although this proposed service was not anticipated when the plan was submitted, this is a very logical service to include here.
- Section 3.B Value of the agency’s IT plan, which describes the benefits of the agency’s investment in IT notes the move by increasing numbers of information services to reduced-cost or preferential delivery of services electronically. This is a natural fit with this proposal to the NITC.
- In the same section there is a note about how technology can and does improve staff productivity; the case for such saving is made earlier in this proposal.
- Again, this same section makes the case for the need for geographic equality in the provision of services, and an equalization of access to information and services no matter the distance from Lincoln. This is especially important for those library staff members who are not able to get away to attend the videoconferences.
- Section 4 of the agency’s IT plan, Future Uses of Information Technology, contains a number of statements in support of this project, some of them repeating earlier sections of the plan. Under section 4.A, Strategies and Future Direction, are included: providing services in a geographically-equalized manner, collaboration with various other agencies to offer Commission services more effectively, providing access statewide via the Internet. Section 4.B, Electronic Government/Education Implementation Plan, includes soliciting and acting on customer input and cooperation and collaboration as key components of agency efforts.

3. Describe, if applicable, how this project furthers the implementation of electronic government.

Business Portal Action Plan: This project addresses the following issues identified in this document:

- The vision of the plan indicating that Nebraska “will be open for business from any place and at any time through the use of e-government”
- All four goals of the plan including briefly: ease of access via the web, efficiency and effectiveness of government operations, cost-effective provision of applications and solutions, and collaboration with other agencies and governments to provide integrated access to information and services
- Several principles guiding the e-government plan also apply to this effort: e-government as a continuous process; opportunities for self-service, integration of information and services, and elimination of time, distance

and availability of staff constraints; cooperation as a critical element for achieving the goals of e-government

- The Purposes and Benefits section of the Business Portal plan also address elements of this proposal: making access to information and services as easy and efficient as possible, and the concepts of one-stop point of access, self-service and continual availability from anywhere
- The Summary of Action Items of the plan includes the following long-term action item: integrate access to services across agencies and political subdivisions. School and public libraries are local political subdivisions

E-Government Strategic Plan: This project addresses the following issues identified in this document:

- The Purposes and Principles section indicates the following will guide the strategic plan's implementation: e-government as a continuous process of using technology to service citizens and improve agency operations; opportunities for major change including self-service, and elimination of time, distance and availability of staff as constraints to providing information and services; and cooperation to achieve the goals of e-government to integrate information and services and allow easy exchange of information
- The Overview section repeats much of what is noted above but makes the additional point: the convenience and economy of self-service becoming the model for transacting business. This project is a model of this approach.
- The Vision section is the same as in the Business Portal plan: The state of Nebraska will be open for business from any place and at any time through the use of e-government
- Goal 1 also applies to this proposal: Anyone needing to do business with state government will be able to go to the state's Web site, easily find the information or service they need, and if they desire, complete all appropriate transactions electronically
- Goal 2 is also pertinent: State agencies will improve services and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations through collaboration, communication, and data sharing between government agencies at all levels
- Goal 3 states: Agencies will examine internal operations to determine cost-effective e-government applications and solutions . . . to improve efficiency and effectiveness by replacing manual operations with automated techniques (Note: by allowing web access versus video access to these reviews on the receiving end)
- Goal 4 states: Agencies will work with other state agencies and local government to develop strategies for using Internet technologies to provide integrated access to information and services to citizens, . . . employees, and other governmental entities. Goal 4C specifically calls for agencies to undertake collaborative projects to integrate electronic access to information and services

- Section 3 Agency Plans notes the Nebraska Library Commission's plans to install a gateway to provide a simplified and unified interface to the statewide commercial databases provided by the Commission in order to simplify access and ultimately provide better services to customers. This project is a logical extension of that approach with the ultimate beneficiaries being Nebraska's children and young adults.

Section IV: Scope and Projected Outcomes

Describe the project's specific scope and projected outcomes. The narrative should address the following:

1. Beneficiaries of this project and the need(s) being addresses

Beneficiaries: Library staff with responsibility for selecting book titles for the library's children and young adult customers who are the ultimate beneficiaries because they will have access to high quality materials

Needs Being Addressed:

- Need for improved access to the book reviews in terms of user-friendliness, self-service, time constraints, access technology, and availability of access (finite number of videotapes versus any time, anywhere access via the web)
- Need to continue to provide value-added reviews of children's and young adult's library materials because of limited time and knowledge on the local level
- Need to find a cost-effective method to provide this improved service, for the Nebraska Library Commission, but also for local users of the information

2. Expected outcomes of the project

- Continuation of quality, value-added book reviews for Nebraska libraries
- Increased access points in providing access to this information statewide, from Harrison to Omaha
- Improved ease for user of this information and service
- Another collaboration with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications
- Investigation of possibility of "selling" this service to other states who, at least on a limited basis, request copies from the current video tape method
- Another incentive to use new technology in libraries, resulting in benefits for local library customers

3. Measurement and assessment methods that will verify project outcomes

- Software linked to each book review to measure number of hits on each title
- Measurement of the number of hits on the Commission's web site related to these book reviews and access via the web
- Compilation of number of phone inquiries to the Commission's reference service, to children's services staff and to the general 800 number concerning the new service

- Evaluation of customer satisfaction with this method of delivery of this service and information, and the percentage of a library's children and young adult titles it selects using this computer-based resource
- Assessment of the children's and young adult's materials in each library through observation (e.g., copyright recency, physical shape of books)

Section V: Project Justification / Business Case

Please provide the project justification in terms of tangible benefits (an economic return on investment) and/or intangible benefits to the agency or the public. The narrative should address the following:

1. Tangible: Economic cost/benefit analysis

During the first year of using this new method there is unlikely to be an economic benefit to the state of Nebraska since the funds required for this start-up are greater than any monetary return on the investment and since we plan on continuing the current videotape approach at least until this new method is thoroughly evaluated related to customer satisfaction, usability, etc. However, we expect the following benefits to accrue:

- Savings to some of our customers who no longer have to travel to videoconference sites in order to have early access to this information (or who have to wait until videotapes of the review sessions are available to check out)
- Potential savings to the Nebraska Library Commission should we decide to replace the current videotape-based method with this method
- Potential return on investment should other states who already use the videotapes we currently produce become interested in accessing the reviews using this new method

2. Intangible: Benefits of the project for customers, clients, and citizens and/or benefits of the project for the agency

- Savings in terms of time commitment by library customers who can now access the reviews at times and places convenient to them, rather than having to travel to videoconference sites or wait for later check out of a finite number of videotape sets
- Faster access to the reviews of the titles, thus speeding the ordering process for local libraries and helping to ensure the acquisition of quality books for children and young adult library customers
- Increased use of new technology in libraries with the resulting improvement in skill level of local library staff; potential access of these reviews by other library customers such as day care personnel, parents, students, etc.
- Contribution toward the attainment of one of the goals of the Nebraska Library Commission to improve library services statewide by helping to provide quality library services to all citizens

3. Other solutions that were evaluated and why they were rejected. Include their strengths and weaknesses. Explain the implications of doing nothing and why this option is not acceptable

- **Streaming video** – We explored this option with NET at some length. The strength of this approach would be, of course, to replicate the current videotape approach as closely as possible while, at the same time, allowing the any place, any time access. It would also introduce local library staff to another higher-level technology feature. The weakness is that it may be too sophisticated, resulting in reluctance on the part of libraries to use this new approach. This could result in reduced use of the book reviews by those who might otherwise find the any time, any place, and improved access by individual title, etc. very appealing and useful. The other weakness concerns the technology itself. The “jerky” appearance of streaming video is distracting to watch and does not replicate the video quality of videotape, at least not yet. Add to this the likelihood that the local library does not have access to high bandwidth, and one can see why this approach is not advisable, at least at this time.
- **Printed book reviews versus sound output reviews** – We are still exploring this option and may fall back on this approach should the sound output approach we prefer prove not to be feasible. The reason we deem this less satisfactory is that the reviewing process is an oral tradition, that is, the delivery of the reviews are enhanced by orally delivering them. The inflection of the reviewer, the sometimes serendipitous and spontaneous comments by the reviewer, and the imagination of the reviewer all add value to the reviews themselves. Added to this is the fact that most reviewers do not write out their reviews verbatim but rather deliver them from a variety of notes, and sticky notes placed in certain sections of the book, among other approaches. Preparing verbatim text of these reviews would lose something in the translation. Should we be forced to put up written rather than oral book reviews, we will need to rethink what we ask our reviewers to do.
- **Doing nothing** – Of course it is always easier, at least at first glance, to do nothing. But this is not consistent with the goals of the Nebraska Library Commission to improve library services statewide, and it certainly does nothing to improve access to these book reviews by those who find the current method either cumbersome or unworkable for their circumstances. Doing nothing also does not move local libraries toward greater use of newer information technology, an added benefit of this project and one that needs to occur if local libraries are to remain useful and relevant to their customers.

4. If the project is required to comply with a state or federal mandate, please so indicate

Not applicable

Section VI: Implementation

Describe the implementation plan – from design through installation and ongoing support – for the project. The narrative should address the following:

1. Project sponsors (s) and stakeholder acceptance analysis

Project sponsors are the Nebraska Library Commission and Nebraska Educational Telecommunications. These two entities have been working together to seek a workable approach to this project for over a year.

The stakeholder acceptance process has been completed prior to the Commission's work with NET and during the time these two entities have been working together. The analysis itself has consisted of assessments in two major areas: the usefulness and use of the book reviews themselves, and the exploration of alternative means of making these book reviews available. In fact, this project is an outgrowth of the first assessment mentioned above. In addition, staff at the Commission completed a statewide survey of children's service needs, some of which is pertinent to this project, and the book reviews themselves are evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Usefulness of Book Reviews

There has been some questioning over the years of how useful the book reviews are to libraries in the state. This questioning arose primarily because of the labor intensity involved in providing this service and information. It needs to be noted that this video approach to offering the book reviews followed an earlier, even more labor-intensive delivery method during which staff and other librarians would tour the state to deliver live book reviews in various locations, hauling the books with them. For the assessment of the current arrangement we developed a brief telephone questionnaire to be used when interviewing public and school librarians, another telephone questionnaire to interview pertinent staff of state library agencies in other states, and an e-mail questionnaire for System Administrators of Nebraska's six library systems.

Thirty-one public and school (with the majority of these being public libraries) librarians were interviewed, five in each system area except Southeast Library System in which six interviews were completed. Staff in other state library agencies – CA, IA, KS, MO, OH, UT, WI, and WY – were interviewed with these states being chosen either because of well-known children's book reviewing processes currently or in the past, or because of their use of the videotapes produced by the Nebraska Library Commission. Briefly, the surveys to libraries found that many of them used the videotape reviews as the primary or a secondary source for their selection of children's and young adult materials for their libraries. In some cases, this was the only source they used except for titles promoted to them by traveling book salespeople.

The information from other states proved interesting and pertinent to our considerations. A quick summary of some of their remarks follows:

- **California** – Has no such service; library associations in certain parts of the state and some of the larger libraries such as Los Angeles Public use their own approach to selection of such materials (e.g., putting books being considered for purchase on shelves with reviews attached). The state library has never done any training on collection development (i.e., training in how to effectively select such materials).
- **Iowa** – Catalogs the videotapes from Nebraska and checks them out to libraries; provides no other such service. They do buy a copy of the annual publication related to children's materials from Wisconsin's Cooperative Children's Book Center – see below – for each public library in the state. The staff member who formerly had responsibility for such services indicated that Iowa, at least at one time, was willing to subsidize what Nebraska is doing in this area. That person indicated that Iowa uses Nebraska's videotapes in order to "push people away from remainder dealers" (i.e., book dealers that sell titles "remaining" that no one has been willing to buy through regular channels) and "to inculcate a culture of reviewing." The interviewee also noted that the service Nebraska provides would not have to be done by every state but could be done cooperatively
- **Kansas** – Has a system of strong regional library systems that informally provide information on children's and young adult books via e-mail, newsletters, articles, etc. Each system has staff that specializes in library services to these customer groups. These staff meet bi-monthly and have generally concluded that selection of these materials is better done at the local level. However, the quality of such selection is inconsistent.
- **Missouri** – At one time Missouri had a very active group known as the Children and Young Adult Book Selection Committee that met several times throughout the year and presented oral reviews of such materials to members of the group itself. The reviews were written up and shared with the state following each meeting. The state still operates a book examination center but has discontinued the committee. In response to a question about whether or not people in Missouri would use Nebraska's videotapes, the interviewee said that she felt librarians there would not invest the amount of time necessary to view the tapes. This person said that Missouri had investigated using the Nebraska tapes to take the place of the book reviews Missouri was doing, that there was some interest, but that the feeling was the reviews were too late to be of use.
- **Ohio** – For six years Ohio produced printed reviews from peers in the Ohio Children's Book Review, but feedback on that publication was that it was not used and that it came too late for libraries to use for their purchases. Ohio plans to have an on-site review collection at the state library but has no further plans.
- **Utah** – Sends out publisher review books to smaller libraries and requests that they send in reviews to the state library, a process that

often does not work well. Some of the state's larger libraries have expressed interest in contributing reviews of such materials to a central database.

- **Wisconsin** – Has the most developed reviewing process for children's books through the Cooperative Children's Book Center; however this center does not do reviewing of young adult titles. The center does programs, has an examination collection, produces an annual publication with reviews and does a fairly elaborate road show with the books themselves.
- **Wyoming** – Gets the videotapes from Nebraska and distributes them to some libraries. This includes putting these videotapes up on a telecommunications system to allow local copying.

Responses from Nebraska's System Administrators also helped inform this process as we explored alternatives or enhancements to the current delivery method. Their responses included, among others:

- **Southeast Library System** provides some live reviews during regularly scheduled meetings, printed reviews in the newsletter, and the routing of professional journals that contain reviews. Generally the Commission videotapes circulate three to five times each time our reviews are produced, and generally it is the one-person library that borrows them because they are most often unable to attend the videoconference session because they have no backup staff to cover the library open hours.
- **Meridian Library System** has a list of seven libraries that check out the videotapes each time they are issued. The libraries really appreciate being able to see the book covers and illustrations, something missing in many written reviews. The administrator indicates that she believes written reviews might take even more time than the videotaped ones. Since there has never been book reviewing done in this System, they would have to look at doing something in the area should our reviews be discontinued.
- **Panhandle Library System** usually has a waiting list when the tapes are issued. Many smaller libraries in the system use the tapes as their major reviewing source based on the lack of time by part-time library staff to regularly read reviews; medium sized libraries use the tapes to balance other review sources. The system administrator notes that the tapes help "many librarians because they don't have to make selections immediately like they have to when a salesman calls or is in the area. They have time to review other sources on the same book, too."
- **Northeast Library System** indicates that only two libraries have borrowed the videos from the office in the past year. This system works closely with Norfolk Public Library and with Wayne State College's book examination center and offers live reviews, an examination collection, and printed reviews in the newsletter. The system administrator notes that "time is always an issue" when it comes to book selection; she identifies useful web sites for system librarians to help with book selection and notes these in the newsletter.

The Children's Services Needs Survey completed by the Nebraska Library Commission received responses from sixty-one public libraries and thirteen school media centers. Several findings from that survey pertain to this proposed project.

- In response to the question, "Are you able to find information and resources on the World-Wide Web that help you do your job?" fifty-seven responded, "Yes" and seventeen responded "No."
- Question: "From most important to least important, please list the roles and responsibilities that are assigned to you as the person responsible for youth services." The top four responses were: information literacy skills, computer instruction, ordering books, and help children select and check out materials.
- Question: "What additional help do you need to improve your collection?" Responses included: more information on non-fiction items, a "peer group book list," and keep the book list and fall/spring book reviews coming to us.
- Question: "What specific services do school librarians need from the Nebraska Library Commission?" Responses included: continued support in access to on-line resources, collection evaluation, and new materials.

2. Define the roles, responsibilities, and required experience of the project team

Nebraska Library Commission: Continue to provide book reviews by making all arrangements for categorizing materials, lining up reviewers, arranging for studio space at NET, etc. Providing the liaison with NET for getting the digitized data on the Commission web site. Provide support for trouble shooting technical problems related to the project. Developing any training materials necessary for Nebraska librarians to use the new system. Provide 25% of initial cost for this project and maintain this process once initiated. Perform a cost-benefit analysis of this process in an ongoing manner. Investigate the use of the current videotape method to determine whether to continue or discontinue, and to determine if this project will continue as a replacement or an enhancement of the current process. Staff must have expertise in reviewing children's and young adult's books, must communicate with NET for both the reviewing sessions and for following up with web-related technical aspects of loading this information on the Commission web site. Staff must possess analytical capability to assess proposed approaches to making this project a reality and to its successful implementation. Maintain the website.

Nebraska Educational Telecommunications: Provide space under contract with the Nebraska Library Commission for studio broadcast and videotaping of review sessions every six months. Provide master tape of videotape sessions to the Commission. (Note: This is covered under an already existing agreement; costs for this are not part of this proposal to the NITC.) Digitizing

of front cover and interior pages of books; digitizing of oral reviews to allow sound output to accompany corresponding visual depiction of book front covers and interior pages. Providing digitized information in such a way as to allow electronic access to individual titles, authors, genres, and age and gender groupings of books reviewed. Provide for ease of access to the greatest number of local computer systems and situations, taking into account bandwidth issues on the local level. Create a web-based interface to allow Commission staff to input raw data related to this project. Designate appropriate staff for liaison with Commission staff to ensure workability of this project.

3. List the major milestones and deliverables for each milestone

October 31, 2001 -- Fall meeting of NITC – If project approved, then the following schedule, etc. would apply

November 15, 2001 – Set up of dynamic window by NET to allow later input of raw data; testing

November 20, 2001 – Sign off by Commission on dynamic window as workable for use by Commission staff to input raw data

[October 26 and November 2, 2001 – Videotaping of reviews at NET]

[November 12, 2001 – Final corrections made on list of book reviews, code sheets, etc.]

November 20, 2001 – Begin input of raw data via dynamic window

4. Training and staff development requirements and procedures

Training on inputting the raw data into the web site will be handled by Computer Team staff at the Commission. Should this prove too burdensome for the Commission to do, we will revisit this issue since NET has offered data input as an option we might pay for instead. It is anticipated that the required training will be workable for the Commission and that staff development requirements will be thus met. We will need to provide information to the library community both about the availability of this product and about how to access it. We are continuing to discuss how best to do this as well as how to keep access procedures as simple as possible to ensure widespread use of this information.

5. Ongoing support requirements, plans and provisions

Support requirements for this project will be similar to those related to other web-based services we provide. We expect, at least at first, that there will be questions from the library field concerning how to access this. We will work with the System Administrators in providing some training to them in order to facilitate this among the libraries in Nebraska.

Section VII: Technical Impact

Describe how the project enhances, changes, or replaces present technology systems, or if new systems are being added. The narrative should address the following:

1. Descriptions of hardware, software, and communications requirements for this project. Describe the strength and weaknesses of the proposed solutions

Pentium III class server running Windows NT 4.0. Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS). Anyone with Internet access will be able to use this.

2. Issues pertaining to reliability, security and scalability

Reliability – Our services are up 99% of the time. We have built-in redundancy in case of hardware failure. We have back up power in case of electrical outages including a UPS on every device. All five of our servers are identical, and the hardware is mirrored.

Security – We install all maintenance and security patches on our servers and subscribe to the STAT Scanner service that give us monthly updates and indicate where all the weaknesses are in the server.

Scalability – If we go with the MP3 audio format, we meet this requirement. MP3 works on all computers. The digitized photos should also be viewable on all computers through the use of a web browser.

3. Conformity with applicable NITC technical standards and guidelines and generally accepted industry standards

Two areas to which this project conforms are:

- Allows features which make it easier for the user to obtain information and services targeted to specific areas of interest
- Permit effective searches of information and services

The descriptions of this project indicate clearly this conformity.

4. Compatibility with existing institutional and/or statewide infrastructure

The project will exist on one of the Commission's five NT servers and so will be compatible with our existing infrastructure

Section VIII: Risk Assessment

Describe possible barriers and risks related to the project. The narrative should address the following:

1. List the identified risks, and relative importance of each

Computer Expertise on the Local Level:

Our Computer Team has identified this as a potential problem especially in relation to the software recommended by NET for the voice output (QuickTime). Our fear is that if the process of gaining access to the information is too complex, we will have local librarians who will simply not try. We have heard this comment in relation to a number of services and information sources we offer through the Commission, so we must take it into account as we do our planning. Relative importance: High

Copyright:

We have had some question about the use of pictures of the front cover and internal pages and illustrations in relation to copyright. Relative importance: Medium

Timeliness (and other Features) of the Reviews:

There has been some concern about the timeliness of the reviews, that is, when they come out in relation to when publishers issue new books. Relative importance: Low

2. Identify strategies which have been developed to minimize risks**Computer Expertise on the Local Level:**

Our Computer Team has identified MP3 as a possible alternative audio format to explore with NET since it is generic and works with any media software. Also the support issues would be considerably lessened with MP3 than with QuickTime. Although our Computer Team has also indicated that it would be much simpler to eliminate sound output altogether (in terms of support, sophistication needed for local access, etc.), we still wish to have sound output if possible, the reasons being: the oral nature of the reviewing process as developed and presented over the years; the fact that the reviewers do not do verbatim reviews, and would have to change the way they present the reviews, or produce an additional printed review for the web site. We still have printed reviews as a fallback, however, should the sound output issue prove to be too difficult this time around. Along with the regional library Systems, provide ongoing technology training. Provide access to federal Library Services and Technology Act grant funds. Plan for the receipt of the Gates Foundation grants (2002 – 2003) that will offer at least one computer setup and software to every eligible library in Nebraska, so that, even if a library is not set up to benefit from this service now, it likely will be in the future.

Copyright:

The reason for listing this as of medium rather than high concern is that NET has already done some research on this issue speaking to a research specialist at NET, a dean of libraries at a major university and a staff member at a university press. All concurred that copyright infringement will not be an issue for several reasons: the reviews are being used for an educational purpose; they comprise an “insubstantial copy”; and the Nebraska Library Commission has not financial incentive in this endeavor. For our part the Commission contacted the Attorney General’s office some time ago for advice on this issue, but we have heard nothing to date. We will do follow up again in that arena for a legal opinion.

Timeliness (and other Features) of the Reviews:

Since these themes emerged during some of the telephone interviews we conducted with various people who either used, or did not use, the book reviews, we have explored it further. To summarize the comments:

- The book reviews (We assume the spring reviews.) could be earlier in relation to the summer reading program theme so that libraries have more time to prepare.
- Face-to-face book reviews are more dynamic and interactive (This person did not seem to know about the earlier face-to-face reviewing that occurred before the newer videotape process came along.)
- I'm not sure if the Commission is receiving a good cross section of new books that are provided free from the publishers or if they are just from a few publishers.

Worry about the timeliness of the book reviews is apparently not wide spread. In interviews with System Administrators, Nebraska librarians, and even with other state libraries, the more common reaction was that children's and young adult's materials tend to be more timeless perhaps than adult materials (perhaps because quite a few of the titles reviewed are fiction rather than non-fiction). We can address the issue of getting the titles related to the summer reading program theme, however, if it is felt that more time is needed to prepare for that program. Consensus appeared to be that the face-to-face programs, while perhaps more dynamic, were just too limiting for most librarians because of the difficulty in finding a time for "everyone" to attend, and because of the time required both to travel to the reviewing and to hear the reviews. Convenience seems to be the watchword. We will revisit the question about whether or not we receive a good cross section of publishers' titles. We suspect we do since these publishers are trying to have their titles known, and they realize that reviewing of this type is one of the best ways to do that.

Conclusion

Just yesterday I was returning from a four-day library leadership seminar in Schuyler at the St. Benedict Center. I was talking to my fellow passengers about our grant proposal to the NITC. One of them who does not often exhibit emotional responses became really excited about this project. She could see immediate application for it in her library. This project is one whose time has come. It helps the Commission and the state as a whole reach the vision of the Nebraska being "open for business from any place and at any time through the use of e-government." It coincides with the goals and objectives of the E-Government Strategic Plan, the Business Portal Action Plan and the Nebraska Library Commission's Agency Comprehensive Information Technology Plan. In essence it melds what some may consider a traditional service (and others call an essential service) with the new technology that will improve access to a vital source of information and improvement. We respectfully request that the State Government Council of the NITC approve this project for funding.

Section IX: Financial Analysis and Budget

1. Provide the following financial information:

	GTCF Grant Funding	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Other Funding Sources	Total
Personnel Costs					
Capital Expenditures (Hardware, software, etc.)					
Contractual Services	\$8,322	\$2,774			\$11,096
Supplies and Materials					
Telecommunications					
Training					
Travel					
Other costs					
Total	\$8,322	\$2,774			\$11,096
		1	2		3

2. Provide a detailed description of the budget items appearing above.

The budget is primarily for our contracting with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications to provide this service collaboratively.

3. Match Requirement: This grant requires a 25% match from the agency. Please use the calculation below to ensure your application meets this requirement.

$$\frac{\text{Total Cash Match (1) + Total In-Kind Match (2)}}{\text{Total Project Cost (3)}} \geq 0.25$$